

CAMPUS Firewatch™

OCTOBER 2000

From the Editor2

ACAP Hosts College Fire

Safety Seminar3

Fraternity Chapter

Distribution3

Seen Elsewhere4

Legislation Update5

College Fire Log7

Fraternity Pleads Guilty

to Fire Violations9

Life Safety in Dormitories10

Fraternity moves into new house

At the beginning of the fall semester, members of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity from the University of Illinois moved into their new fraternity house. The building, when fully occupied, will hold 54 students and one graduate advisor.

In 1967, the fraternity's house at 302 East John Street was destroyed by a fire that some believed to be arson, while others thought it was accidental. The property was underinsured, and the decision was made to sell it and purchase a house in nearby Urbana, according to the Fraternity's advisor, Matt Wilson.

Recently, they were able to purchase a house located at 401 East John

Off Campus... Out of Sight, Out of Mind?

Ed Comeau, writer-tech.com

On September 29, 2000 a fire killed a University of Pittsburgh senior. Joseph Marcinek was majoring in psychology and was going to graduate this spring.

The fire occurred in an off-campus apartment that had seven units. It was determined to be an arson fire, caused by the ex-boyfriend of the woman living on the second floor. Seven of the people in the building were able to flee, but Marcinek, who lived on the third floor of the building, was not able to escape from the fire. (See this month's Campus Firelog for more information).

Across the country, in Berkeley, California, another fire claimed the lives of a senior from the University of California and both of her parents. In one moment, three of four family members were killed by a fire that was started by combustibles placed on top of a furnace catching fire. Fire officials were unable to determine if there were any operating smoke detectors in the building.

In Franklin, Massachusetts, the apartment building where a student from Dean College lived caught fire in the afternoon. An apartment fire in New Brunswick, New Jersey displaced 20 students from Rutgers University. A fire in State College, Pennsylvania occurred in an apartment building that houses a number of students.

Fires in off-campus apartments are not an uncommon occurrence, as we are seeing each month in Campus Firelog. Fire officials believe that the number of off-campus fires involving students are a somewhat "hidden" problem because these fires are not identified in the national statistics as involving students.

What is being done to address this issue?

At the University of Pittsburgh, it was recognized some time ago that the houses and apartments that the students were living in had some serious deficiencies. "Parents were coming into Pitt and saying that they couldn't believe the condition of the places (where the students were living off-campus)," said Jimmy King, a senior building inspector with the city of Pittsburgh. "They were dumbfounded that Pitt could let them advertise in the newspaper."

As a result, the university and city developed a program to try and address this problem. A landlord could request a special annual inspection of their property by the city. This inspection would be done using the criteria in the property maintenance code issued by the Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA). Once the landlord passes this inspection, they could advertise their property through the university.

"We would check each smoke detector, door closers, fire doors, make sure sprinkler heads weren't painted over, that exitways aren't blocked and that the fire escapes are in good shape," said King. The only problem was that most of the landlords that did sign up for the program did not have many problems. Unfortunately, says King, "it didn't hit the

FROM THE Editor

Berkeley, California. A senior and both of her parents die in a house fire.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A senior is killed in an off-campus apartment fire.

Thousands of miles apart, yet both of these fires show that the problem of fires in off-campus occupancies is real and one that we have to start addressing more aggressively.

Off-campus housing fire safety seems to be an issue that 'falls through the cracks.' Statistics do not capture these incidents as involving students-they are listed as another residential fire. At Campus Fire Safety Forum I, everyone agreed that off-campus fires involving students is a serious concern that is not recognized for the true dangers they present.

Some schools say that it is not their problem-it belongs to the town. The local municipality often doesn't have the resources to address these occupancies along with all of the other issues that they have to deal with on a daily basis. When one campus fire safety professional was asked why they do not provide any fire prevention training to off-campus students, his response was 'I never thought of it.'

So who should?

The University of Pittsburgh and the City of Pittsburgh made an effort to address this problem in the past. Unfortunately, the program did not succeed as hoped. I'm sure there are others out there addressing the dangers through education and ordinances, but is enough being done? As we see in this month's Campus Firelog, we need to do more.

It would be great to have sprinklers installed in all of these off-campus apartment complexes and houses, but that is not going to happen. What we can do is provide the education and training to these students to ensure that they are aware of proper fire safety measures. In my opinion, this endeavor can be done as a cooperative effort between the school and the local jurisdiction-a further extension of the 'town/gown' relationship. By using the expertise of each organization, we can ensure that we reach these students on a regular basis with the right message.

We are making great strides in fire safety on-campus. We are starting to make some progress with the Greek housing, although there is much more to be done. We really need to start addressing the off-campus housing issue so that we do not see more tragedies such as Pittsburgh and Berkeley.

Ed Comeau, the editor of Campus Firewatch, is the former chief fire investigator for the National Fire Protection Association. He began his involvement in campus fire safety as a fire fighter with the Amherst, Massachusetts, fire department while pursuing his degree in civil engineering. He can be reached at publisher@campus-firewatch.com.

CAMPUS Firewatch™

OCTOBER 2000

Campus Firewatch is a publication of writer-tech.com, llc, a technical writing firm specializing in fire safety. All of the material contained in Campus Firewatch is copyrighted and may not be reproduced or distributed without permission.

Campus fire safety is a complex issue. The information in this newsletter is provided to help you in your efforts to provide as fire-safe a community as possible. However, it is no replacement for professional advice. For further assistance, contact your local fire department.

Subscribe Today!

You can subscribe to Campus Firewatch, online, and receive your own copy each month, right to your email address. Simply visit our web site at www.campus-fire-watch.com.

Reprints

We welcome reprints of the articles that appear in Campus Firewatch. Please contact us at publisher@campus-firewatch.com for permission to reprint material.

Campus Firewatch™

a publication of writer-tech.com, llc
P.O. Box 1046
Belchertown, MA 01007
PH: (413) 323-6002
FX: (413) 323-5295
publisher@campus-firewatch.com
www.campus-firewatch.com

Design and Layout:

McCusker Communications, Inc.
Westwood, MA
PH: (781) 461-9664

ACAP HOSTS COLLEGE FIRE SAFETY SEMINAR

by Dan Werner

Over 100 participants, representing 23 states, Canada and Puerto Rico attended a recent fire safety seminar hosted by the Association of College Administration Professionals (www.acap.org) in Tampa, Florida.

The two-day seminar focusing on issues surrounding residence hall fire safety opened with Stan Clark, President of ACAP introducing the facilitators for the conference. Daniel Benny, the director of Safety and Security at Harrisburg Area Community College, located in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania was first to address the assembly. Benny presented an overview of the conference as well as speaking to topics such as defining fire and its behavior, fire protection systems, fire protection programs and a group exercise aimed at evaluating observation skills.

Dan Werner, the director of the Office of Security and Safety at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio followed by presenting five topics in the afternoon session. Werner, in a discussion-based format, covered topics such as the major causes of residence hall fires, first line response to a reported fire, the "crying wolf syndrome" associated with fire alarms. Fire drill procedures were also examined in this session. The collegiate response to a reported fire and development of an emergency response plan and dealing with the media during and after an emergency were also a part of the afternoon session.

Ed Sullivan, the campus safety director at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont, led off the second day of the conference. Sullivan explained the process of a campus fire safety assessment, fire extinguisher testing and evacuation procedures.

Don Donath, director of education and training for the National Fire Sprinkler Association capped off the seminar with an explanation of fire sprinklers by touching on the history and development of the equipment, different styles and types of sprinklers. Donath explained the installation procedures, capabilities and limitations of sprinkler systems and provided advice on what security directors and physical plant personnel could expect when having sprinkler systems installed.

Discussion centered around the use of fire extinguishers in residence halls, and the pros and cons of removing this equipment as well as training students and college and university personnel in the use of fire suppression equipment. A recent OSHA citation against Seton Hall regarding the lack of protective clothing and equipment for resident assistants was also discussed, as was the roles of student employees and other non-fire fighting personnel in the event of fire also brought discussion among the group.

FRATERNITY - continued from page 1

Street. This house had been previously owned by the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity since about 1915. The building, which had been built as a fraternity, had a series of additions put on, one in the late 1940s and then another in the early 1960s.

While Phi Gamma Delta owned the property there had been two serious fires, said Wilson. The first one, in the 1940s, caused significant damage, but the house was rebuilt. Another fire in the early 1960s damaged the building, which "prompted the addition. The property has a history fires, and they took a lot of measure after the second fire to prevent any damage that would happen," said Wilson. This included using non-combustible materials such as brick and stone in the construction.

The fraternity had a fund-raising campaign that raised \$700,000, according to the Delta Tau Delta website. These funds were used to renovate the building and install Ethernet wiring in the house. However, the building was not equipped with a sprinkler system. When asked as to why this was not considered, Wilson replied that it is "one of those things that is not mandated...it was a decision that was made as a cost factor."

According to the Delta Tau Delta national fraternity, the fraternity's "aggregate value of houses (is) in excess of \$50 million." A Delta Tau Delta endowment fund, the Loyalty and Centennial Development fund, is used to "provide mortgage loans to house corporations of chapters acquiring, building or renovating their shelters," according to the Delta Tau Delta website. This fund currently has approximately \$4.5 million, stated a spokesman from the Delta Tau Delta's national office, that is loaned out to chapters. The spokesman had no comment when asked as to explain the reason for not installing a sprinkler system in this occupancy was because of finances.

Fraternity Chapter Distribution

How many fraternity chapters are there and where are they located?

Using the latest information (Winter 1999) published by the North-American Interfraternity Conference, Campus-Firewatch analyzed the location of fraternity chapters across the country. Please note that the directory lists only the 66 fraternal organizations that belong to NIC, and not all of the fraternities listed have properties on the campuses.

The state with the most fraternity chapters is Pennsylvania, with 454 listed at 55 institutions, which represents 8% of all of the chapters listed. Running a distant second is New York State with 368 fraternities located at 62 institutions, followed by California with 343 chapters at 41 schools. These three states, combined, represent over one-fifth of the fraternity chapters in the country.

Off Campus - continued from page 1

people that it needed to."

"Most of the landlords are reluctant to bring in the inspectors," said Robert Hopkins, the director of the housing bureau at the University of Pittsburgh. "They have liked the fact that there is no inspection." Once a property receives its occupancy permit, there are no subsequent inspections unless a problem is reported. "I do about two to three inspections a week" in response to complaints, reported King.

Unfortunately, according to both King and Hopkins, the program has died off over the past few years because few landlords are taking advantage of the program. "The people that have been inspected do it as a gesture of community support. It has been good for small landlords to get highlighted in the University system," said Hopkins. Once a landlord passes inspection, the university Housing Bureau will list it as an inspected property and be listed by the university.

In reviewing this list on Pitt's website, only three properties were listed, which is a very small portion of the off-campus housing. Hopkins said it is difficult to determine how many students live off-campus in the immediate area. Out of a total enrollment of approximately 30,000 students only 6,400 live on-campus and there is a great demand for affordable off-campus housing, according to both Hopkins and King. The university is adding additional beds and hoping to change the supply/demand ratio to a point where "the landlord will look for an advantage," said Hopkins.

The Pitt Housing Resource Center does offer some guidelines for students renting apartments. When reviewing the list of tips provided to the students, out of 45 items, only two are related to life safety.

8. Are hallways well lit? Are there fire extinguishers and smoker (sic) detectors?
9. Does the building have a fire escape? If not, where is the nearest emergency exit?

Seen Elsewhere....

University Business Magazine

University Business magazine (www.universitybusiness.com) recently published an article on fires on campus. Campus Firewatch was interviewed for this article and is listed as a resource for further information.

Morgantown, West Virginia

According to press reports, the city of Morgantown, West Virginia has had a rash of fires that have been a challenge for the fire department. Burning sofas stuffed with aerosol cans and mattresses doused with lighter fluid were some of the incidents mentioned. IT was reported that between September 1999 and June 2000 there were 135 street fires, 93 of which occurred in a section of town that was dominated by students.

In response, the city council approved giving three more firefighters the title, and authority, of deputy fire marshal to help combat this problem. In addition, the city has taken a "zero-tolerance" attitude. Seven people, including five students from West Virginia University, pled guilty to setting fires.

In August, when school started, there were reported to be 20 street fires. This dropped to six in September, and by October 6th there had only been one.

Murray, Kentucky

The trial of the man accused of setting a fatal fire at Murray State College is being moved to another county because of the press reports surrounding the fire. Michael Minger was killed in a fire on September 18, 1998.

While the University of Pittsburgh has taken some steps to educate students who are moving off-campus, this is a group of students that are difficult to reach. Providing the information and education to these students once they move off-campus is a challenge recognized by many fire officials. At Rutgers, where there are 17,000 students living on campus, fire officials have their hands full delivering education and training to these students. "It is virtually impossible to identify who is living off campus," said Joseph Zuccarello, the chief of University Emergency Services. "You usually find out only when you have an incident and they come to you looking for housing."

However, off-campus may be where the greatest potential for tragedy exists, as we have seen in both Berkeley and Pittsburgh. Developing programs to reach out to these students and ensuring they remember the fire safety education they were provided while living on-campus can change some of these tragic outcomes.

Campus Firewatch Listserv

Campus Firewatch monitors the fire activity in the nation's colleges and universities by checking the wire services on a daily basis. When we learn of an incident, we'll send out a notice through our listserv.

This listserv also provides an opportunity for you to post questions to be answered by others involved in campus fire safety. Subscribers to the list include campus fire safety officials, fire chiefs and university administrators, among others.

If you would like to join the growing number of people that are using this valuable free service, you can subscribe through the Campus Firewatch website at www.campus-firewatch.com.

LEGISLATION

Update

Legislation

S 2100 **College Fire Prevention Act**

Jurisdiction

Federal

Sponsor

Sen. John Edwards (D-NC)
United States Senate
225 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3154
senator@edwards.senate.gov

Cosponsors

Senator Spencer Abraham (R-MI)
United States Senate
329 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-4822
Fax: (202) 224-8834
michigan@abraham.senate.gov
<http://www.senate.gov/~abraham/>

Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT)
448 Russell Office Bldg.
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-2823 (tel)
(202) 224-1083 (fax)
Senator@dodd.senate.gov
<http://www.senate.gov/~dodd/>

Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL)
364 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-2152 (tel)
(202) 228-0400 (fax)
dick@durbin.senate.gov
<http://www.senate.gov/~durbin/>

Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)
United States Senate
506 Senate Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

(202) 224-4744 (tel)
(202) 224-9707 (fax)
frank_lautenberg@lautenberg.senate.gov
<http://www.senate.gov/~lautenberg/>

Senator Robert Torricelli (D-NJ)
United States Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3224 (tel)
(202) 224-8567 (fax)
senatortorricelli@torricelli.senate.gov

Funding

\$100,000,000

Facilities

Dormitories, fraternities or sororities

Status

Referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on 2/24/00. Still in committee and no action has been taken since it was referred to committee.

Summary

Authorizes appropriations for competitive grants to help provide fire sprinkler systems in student housing and dormitories.

Authorizes the Secretary of Education to award such grants to States, private or public colleges or universities, fraternities, or sororities to assist them in providing such systems.

Requires grant recipients to provide matching funds equal to at least one-half of project costs.

Directs the Comptroller General to gather, and report to Congress, data on the number of college and university housing facilities and dormitories that have and do not have fire sprinkler systems and other forms of built-in fire protection mechanisms.

Legislation

S 2108 **HR 3895** **Campus Fire Safety** **Right to Know Act**

Jurisdiction

Federal

Sponsors

Senator Robert Toricelli (D-NJ)
United States Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3224 (tel)
(202) 224-8567 (fax)
senatortorricelli@torricelli.senate.gov

Representative Bill Pascrell
1722 Longworth Building (HOB)
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-5751 (tel)
(202) 225-5782 (fax)
bill.pascrell@mail.house.gov

Funding

N/A

Facilities

Campuses nationwide

Status

Referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions on 2/28/00.

Referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce on 3/9/00.

Summary

Amends the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require each eligible institution participating in any program under title IV (Student Assistance) to: (1) prepare, publish, and distribute to all current students and employees, and to any applicant for enrollment or

employment upon request, an annual fire safety report which discloses specified types of information about that institution's campus fire safety standards and practices; (2) make timely reports to the campus community on fires that are reported to local fire departments and the incidence of false fire alarms on campus, to aid in preventing similar occurrences; (3) maintain a log recording all fires reported to local fire departments and all false fire alarms, open to public inspection except where disclosure of such information is prohibited by law; and (4) submit annually to the Secretary of Education a copy of statistics on campus occurrences of fires and false fire alarms.

Directs the Secretary to: (1) review such statistics; (2) make copies available to the public; (3) identify exemplary fire safety policies, procedures, and practices, and disseminate information concerning those policies, procedures, and practices that have proven effective in the reduction of campus fires; and (4) report to the Congress analyses of the current status of fire safety systems in college and university facilities, and of the appropriate fire safety standards to apply to these facilities, as well as cost estimates and recommendations.

Legislation

S 2178

HR 3831

Fire Safe Dorm Act of 2000

Jurisdiction

Federal

Sponsors

Senator Frank Lautenberg
United States Senate
506 Senate Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4744 (tel)
(202) 224-9707 (fax)
frank_lautenberg@lautenberg.senate.gov
<http://www.senate.gov/~lautenberg/>
<http://www.senate.gov/~torricelli/>

Representative Carolyn Maloney
2430 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-7944 (tel)
(202) 225-4709 (fax)

rep.carolyn.maloney@mail.house.gov
<http://www.house.gov/maloney/>

Funding

N/A

Facilities

Campuses nationwide

Status

Referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on 3/2/00. Still in committee and no action has been taken.

Referred to the House Subcommittee on Basic Research on 3/9/00. Still in committee.

Summary

The objective of this bill is to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require colleges and universities to disclose to students and their parents the incidents of fires in dormitories, and their plans to reduce fire safety hazards in dormitories, to require the United States Fire Administration to establish fire safety standards for dormitories, and for other purposes.

Legislation

HR 4504

**Higher Education Technical
Amendments of 2000**

Jurisdiction

Federal

Sponsor

Representative Buck McKeon
2242 Rayburn HOB
Washington D.C. 20515
(202) 225-1956 (tel)
(202) 226-0683 (fax)
telltuck@mail.house.gov
<http://www.house.gov/mckeon/>

Funding

N/A

Facilities

Campuses nationwide

Status

Referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on 6/13/00. Still in committee and no action has been taken.

Summary

This legislation has several amendments attached to it pertaining to campus fire safety. They include providing a description of campus fire safety features, reports on the number of fires and false alarms, and an analysis of current fire safety systems and plans for upgrading fire protection.

Legislation

HB 2458

Dormitory Automatic Sprinkler Act

Jurisdiction

Pennsylvania

Sponsors

Representative Michael McGeehan
221B South Office
Harrisburg, PA 17120
(717) 772-4029 (tel)
mcgeehan@pahouse.net
www.pahouse.net/McGeehan/index.htm

Funding

\$100,000,000

Facilities

Dormitories and Greek housing

Status

On October 11, this legislation was passed by the House on a vote of 190 to 1. It now moves to the state Senate for action.

Summary

Representative Michael McGeehan introduced House Bill 2458, the Dormitory Automatic Sprinkler Act, on April 11, 2000. This bill calls for the installation of sprinklers in all new dormitories, existing dormitories and Greek housing within five years. It proposes the appropriation of \$100,000,000 to fund a sprinkler loan fund for low interest loans.

CAMPUS

Fire Log

The following are brief summaries of incidents that have occurred in college occupancies. Unless noted otherwise, they have been taken from press accounts and have not been verified for accuracy. Several of these incidents will be profiled in future issues of Campus Firewatch.

If you have an incident that you would like to contribute for this column, please contact us at publisher@campus-firewatch.com.

September 12, 2000

University of Minnesota Minneapolis, MN

Campus Firewatch obtained the following information from media reports, official sources and interviews.

An unattended candle started a fire in Roy Wilkins Hall. At approximately 11:00 p.m., a student was passing by the building and heard a smoke detector sounding. He activated the manual pull station, which alerted the occupants of the building.

According to university officials, the fire was started by an unattended candle on a coffee table in one of the apartments. The fire damage was limited to the coffee table, with smoke damage in the apartment. The unit was unoccupied at the time of the fire.

The building is a four-story, non-combustible structure with 74 units that are a mixture of one- and two-bedroom and efficiency apartments. It is equipped with a sprinkler system in all of the units. The building is also equipped with smoke detectors, but details on the system were not available. The capacity of the building is 137 people.

Candles are not permitted in the residences.

September 18, 2000

Rutgers University New Brunswick, NJ

A small explosion and fire occurred in a classroom building at 6:00 p.m. The incident occurred in a laboratory in Boyden Hall, and was attributed to a buildup of hydrogen that leaked from a piece of apparatus.

September 21, 2000

Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College Miami, OK

A fire that destroyed a building used as an intramural gym and music hall was caused by sparks from a welding operation.

September 21, 2000 (follow-up)

University of California Berkeley, CA

The fire that killed a university senior and her parents was determined to be accidental. The off-campus fire occurred in a rental house that the student was moving into at the time of the fire. According to press reports, the fire was caused when combustible material was left on a floor furnace. Investigators were unable to determine if smoke detectors were present or not in the structure at the time of the fire.

September 25, 2000

University of Wisconsin-Madison Madison, WI

A female student was charged with arson in connection with a fire at the Eagle Heights apartment building. According to press reports, she started the fire in her apartment as a suicide attempt, but abandoned the attempt and fled the apartment. Damage was limited to the apartment of origin and was estimated to be approximately \$40,000. The apartment building had 12 units.

September 26, 2000

Brown University Providence, RI

A candle in Emery Hall at Brown University, Rhode Island, ignited a student's books and papers on fire. She had left the candle burning when she went to sleep, and was woken when the room's smoke detector was activated. The student was treated for second degree burns.

September 27, 2000

Ithaca College Ithaca, NY

A fire in the kitchen of a dining facility forced the evacuation of 700 students from the dining facility and two adjacent residence halls. The fire damage was limited to the grill area and ductwork. The fire occurred at 6:41 p.m., and students were allowed to return to their rooms at approximately 11:30 p.m.

Campus Fire Log - continued from page 8

September 29, 2000

University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA

Campus Firewatch obtained the following information from media reports, official sources and interviews.

A student was killed in an off-campus house fire that was determined to be arson.

The fire was reported at 6:36 a.m. to the Pittsburgh Fire Department.

The fire was started on the second floor in the apartment by the ex-boyfriend of the occupant, who was not home at the time of the fire. It was reported that there were eight people in the three-story building at the time of the fire. All, except for the student on the third floor, were able to escape from the building. The cause of death for the occupant on the third floor was smoke inhalation.

The building was equipped with smoke detectors, some of which were hardwired and some were single-station, battery-powered. Officials reported that some were not operational at the time of the fire, although it is unknown which ones did not operate.

(See the related story in this issue of Campus Firewatch for more details.)

September 29, 2000

University of Pennsylvania
State College, PA

A fire in an off-campus apartment building was contained to the kitchen of a second floor apartment, with significant heat and smoke damage throughout the unit. According to Tim Knisely, senior fire and housing inspector for the Centre Region Code Administration, the area of origin was the trashcan. It was detected by the automatic detection system. The building was a three-story, non-combustible, unsprinklered building that housed a number of students.

October 5, 2000

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI

A fire occurred in the University of Michigan University Hospital's waste incinerator. The incinerator was being dismantled when the fire occurred. The fire was confined to the incinerator.

October 6, 2000

Tennessee Tech University
Cookeville, TN

Campus Firewatch obtained the following information from media reports, official sources and interviews.

A fire in a three story, wood-frame fraternity destroyed the second and third stories of the building in an early morning fire.

According to fire officials, the alarm was called in at 5:28 a.m. A female witness is reported to have heard a smoke detector activating, and upon investigation found a fire in the room. She woke the occupants of the room, who then escaped.

Upon arrival, the fire department reported that there was fire on the second floor. Several students had climbed out on the roof of the building from the second floor that had to be rescued by ladders. Some of the occupants had jumped out of the building from windows on the second floor, while the occupants of the third floor had come down the single interior open stairway. One of these occupants suffered first and second degree burns.

Others occupants who were on the front lawn, could not verify that everyone was out of the building. Because it was Homecoming, there were additional guests in the building at the time.

A crew immediately advanced a hoseline to the second floor, while another crew advanced to the third floor to conduct search and rescue operations. A second hoseline was advanced to the second floor to assist in the firefighting operations because the fire had spread from the room of origin, across the hall into a bathroom.

The fire was brought under control in approximately 30 minutes.

According to Chief Schmid of the Cookeville Fire Department, the cause of the fire was electrical. In the room of origin an extension cord had been plugged into a wall outlet, run under a carpet, and then bundled up under a desk. There were a number of appliances plugged into this extension cord, including a computer, several refrigerators, a microwave and other items.

The building was a three-story, balloon-frame structure with a basement. There were approximately five sleeping rooms—three on the second floor and two on the third floor.

There were single station, battery-powered smoke detectors in the individual rooms and in the corridors.

The only means of egress for the second and third floors were via an open stairway that extended from the first floor to the third floor.

This fraternity had been inspected last year at their request. At that time, the fire department advised the fraternity to not use the third floor as a sleeping area because of the lack of adequate egress.

October 9, 2000

University of Nebraska at Omaha
Omaha, NE

A fire at the Omaha football stadium damaged three motorized carts, football and track equipment as well as the training and weight rooms. The fire is believed to be accidental.

October 11, 2000

Dean College
Franklin, MA

Campus Firewatch obtained the following information from media reports, official sources and interviews.

An off-campus fire in a multi-family house caused significant damage to the building.

The building was a Victorian style, balloon-frame structure. The fire started on the second floor, and was reported to have been caused by combustible material on top of a stove being ignited when a burner was turned on.

The call to the Franklin Fire Department was made at approximately 4:00 p.m. by a resident that was trapped on the second floor. Four people were rescued from the building, and one was transported to a nearby hospital for smoke inhalation.

It was reported that there were smoke detectors in the building and they were operational at the time of the fire.

One of the occupants of the building was a student at nearby Dean College. Dean College has had two serious dormitory fires since 1995.

October 10, 2000

University of Virginia **Charlottesville, VA**

A fire in the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity was caused by too many electrical cords

plugged in an electrical panel. The fire was small, but as a result, officials inspected the house and found a number of life-safety violations that resulted in the house being closed until corrections were made. Some of the violations included miswired electrical panels and extension cords being used as permanent wiring.

October 13, 2000

Rutgers University **New Brunswick, NJ**

Campus Firewatch obtained the following information from media reports, official sources and interviews.

A fire in an off-campus apartment building damaged two apartments and displaced 20 Rutgers University students. The fire occurred at approximately 5:30 a.m. and was detected by a passing university

employee who saw smoke coming out of the eaves of the building.

The students were awoken by the sounds of fire fighters and police officers shouting for them to leave the building. One student reported smelling smoke for an hour before the fire, which was reported to be electrical.

According to fire officials, the fire started in an exterior wall. Because the structure was balloon-frame construction, it was necessary to open up the wall to check for fire extension in the fire building as well as the adjacent apartment building.

The building of origin was equipped with single station smoke detectors in the units and smoke detectors in the common areas. The smoke detectors in the unit of origin were not operational because the students had removed the batteries.

October 15, 2000

University of Texas at El Paso **El Paso, TX**

A fieldhouse at Kidd Field was damaged by a fire in an area where sets for theatrical performances are stored. The fire occurred shortly after 8:00 p.m.

Fraternity pleads guilty to fire violations

by Mark Tetreault

In a negotiated plea the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity (SAE) plead guilty to one count of violating the state fire code, and was fined \$1,000.00. Two other counts were continued for a one year period.

Last spring the Durham Fire Department filed charges in the Durham District Court against Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity after a large party was broken up at the house. The charges were operating a place of assembly without a permit and overcrowding, and obstructing the means of egress.

As part of the plea all but \$200.00 of the fine was suspended provided that several conditions were met.

1. SAE must maintain their building free of fire code violations for a period of one year
2. All the brothers living at the house must participate in, and pass, a 6 hour fire safety awareness class.
3. The fraternity must follow the stipulations of a previously issued conditional use permit. Included in the permit are stipulations the house remain alcohol free, and the house be maintained in accordance with the BOCA Property Maintenance Code.

Justice Taube of the Durham District Court stated that he felt this was a fair plea, but cautioned the fraternity brothers against appearing before his court again for similar infractions.

The requirement that the house be alcohol free is also a condition of the mortgage on the house. Prior to this court case the town of Durham had notified the mortgage holder (SAE National) of violations of the alcohol policy. Thus far these notices have been ignored by the national fraternity.

For more information, please contact: Mark W. Tetreault, Fire Marshal
Durham Fire Department, 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824, (603)862-1426

Life Safety in Dormitories

James D. Lake

Reprinted with permission from NFPA Journal™ (Volume 94 No 5) © 2000 National Fire Protection Association all rights reserved.

Life safety requirements for dormitories may vary depending on whether the building is new or existing.

As a result of recent fires in college dormitories, NFPA has responded to a number of inquiries from the media, colleges, and politicians about the fire and life safety requirements for dormitories found in NFPA 101®, Life Safety Code®. It's important to note that provisions for dormitories may differ if the building is new or existing. The provisions for hotels and dormitories, whether new or existing, were part of the Building Exits Code which preceded the first edition of the Life Safety Code in 1966. The provisions for new construction can be found in Chapter 28 of the 2000 edition, and those for existing buildings can be found in Chapter 29.

Q.How does the Life Safety Code define a dormitory?

A.The code defines a dormitory as a building or a space in a building in which group sleeping accommodations are provided in one room or a series of closely associated rooms under joint occupancy and single management for more than 16 people who aren't members of the same family. The facility may or may not provide meals, but it may not have individual cooking facilities.

Q.What if the dormitory has accommodations for 16 or fewer people?

A.If the building houses 16 or fewer people, it's classified as a lodging and rooming house. In that case, it's subject to the provisions of Chapter 26, which differ significantly from those for dormitories in Chapters 28 and 29.

Q.Are automatic sprinklers required in dormitories?

A.New dormitories must be protected by an approved, supervised automatic sprinkler system unless they're low-rises and all the sleeping rooms have ground-level doors to the outside or to access balconies. These code provisions cover dormitories, as well as hotels. In fact, it was the conditions contributing to fatalities in hotels—such as sleeping occupants unfamiliar with their surroundings—that prompted the committee to mandate that most dormitories have an automatic sprinkler system. Automatic sprinklers aren't required in all existing dormitories. However, the code provides significant incentives to install sprinklers, including reducing the fire-resistance rating of exit enclosures and increasing the common path of travel and travel distance. Code provisions also address exit discharge, vertical openings, protection of hazardous areas, interior finishes, corridor wall construction, and smoke barriers.

Existing high-rise dormitories must have an automatic sprinkler system unless every sleeping room or suite has exterior exit access. Such an egress arrangement doesn't use interior corridors which might not remain tenable for long during a fire.

Q.What kind of fire alarm and detection system is required for dormitories?

A.Both new and existing dormitories must have a fire alarm system. Initiation of the system is accomplished by the required manual pulls stations in the building or the required manual pull station at a front desk or other convenient central point that's continuously supervised. The system will also be initiated by any required automatic sprinkler system or detection system.

There are some exceptions for both new and existing buildings.

Automatic occupant notification is required in new and existing dormitories, although the code recognizes two alternative occupant notification arrangements. These are positive alarm sequence and presignal systems, which allow for a delay in notification so that staff can verify the emergency. The use of positive alarm sequence recognizes a technology similar to a presignal system but with additional fail-safe features. Presignal systems have repeatedly delayed alarms in multiple-death fires and aren't permitted in new construction. However, nuisance alarms are a real problem in dormitories, so presignal systems are still permitted in existing buildings with additional code restrictions on their operation.

The code exempts sleeping room smoke alarms from initiating a building fire alarm system. Smoke alarms in sleeping rooms are usually single-station alarms provided solely to notify occupants of smoke in that room. Thus, the alarms aren't a part of a required automatic detection system and are exempt from having to initiate the building alarm system.

Smoke alarms must be installed in all sleeping rooms and living areas within a room or suite. The code doesn't prohibit room alarms from activating the system, but it discourages them to prevent activations that may cause nuisance alarms. Alarms are available that annunciate at a central point, alerting the occupants of the room and notifying management of a problem in a room without sounding an alarm throughout the facility.

House-powered, single-station smoke alarms are required in each sleeping room and living area in a room or suite to alert the occupants to a fire originating in that room or suite. In new dormitories smoke alarms must be hard-wired to the building's electrical system. In existing buildings the alarms can be battery-operated. Normally, they aren't tied to the building fire alarm.

Q. Ideally, how should it all work?

A. When the smoke alarm alerts the room's occupant, he or she is expected to leave the room and the self-closing device on the corridor door is expected to close the door. The occupant is then expected to pull a manual alarm station, initiating the building alarm system. In a new building, corridor smoke detectors or automatic sprinklers will kick in if the occupant fails to sound the alarm.

A smoke alarm is also required in each living area in a room or suite for two reasons. First, the living area is often used for sleeping, even if this wasn't its original intent. And second, a fire in the living area will rapidly block escape from the sleeping area in most cases.

Q. What are the requirements for separation of building corridors?

A. The provisions for corridor separation reflect the concern for protecting people in sleeping rooms. The minimum fire-resistance rating for corridor wall construction—one hour for existing buildings and a half-hour for new construction—is intended to prevent fire from spreading from the corridor to a room and vice versa.

Most existing lathe-and-plaster walls provide 20- to 30-minute fire-resistance ratings. If the building has automatic sprinkler protection throughout, the existing walls shouldn't have to be replaced, as corridor walls need only resist the passage of smoke in existing buildings with automatic sprinklers.

Room corridor doors must be self-closing and have a minimum 20-minute fire-protection rating. In existing buildings with corridor sprinkler protection that's been installed in accordance with Option 3 for apartment buildings, the code allows a nonrated door that can resist the passage of smoke. A self-closing door is needed to complete the separation established by the rated corridor wall. No exceptions or options permit omitting the self-closing device on the door. Although an existing wall needn't be fire-rated if there's sprinkler protection, the wall must be solid and resist the passage of smoke.

Q. Are the furnishings and contents of dormitories regulated?

A. Although there are no mandatory references to the upholstered furniture and mattress provisions of the code, most new dormitories will be sprinklered in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 28, and sprinklered spaces are exempt from regulation on the assumption that the sprinklers will prevent flashover.

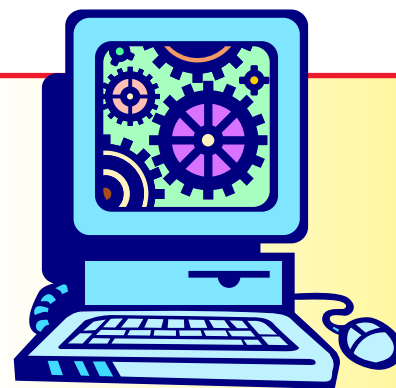
Existing dormitories may install sprinklers to take advantage of these exceptions. For nonsprinklered dormitories, the ability of new furniture to resist ignition by a cigarette should be proven by testing, as a minimum.

Q. Are fire drills required in dormitories?

A. The code requires that emergency egress and relocation drills be conducted regularly. The frequency isn't specified, although Section 4.7 requires that fire drills be conducted often enough to familiarize occupants with the procedure. The code further requires that emergency instructions be posted in each room. The information and the manner in which it is posted are up to the authority having jurisdiction and will vary depending on the building, its layout, and the protection provided.

James D. Lake is a senior fire protection specialist and staff liaison to the Technical Committees on Residential Occupancies, Board and Care Facilities, and Building Service and Fire Protection Equipment.

Responses to questions in "Just Ask" aren't formal interpretations issued pursuant to NFPA Regulations. Any opinion expressed is the personal opinion of the author and doesn't necessarily represent the official position of NFPA or its technical committees.



Campus Firewatch Website

The value of this newsletter doesn't stop with just this copy. Visit its companion website at www.campus-firewatch.com, where you will find a wealth of information relating to campus fire safety. Included on the site is....

- *Model legislation from Chapel Hill, North Carolina*
- *Lesson plans*
- *Pending federal and state legislation*
- *Testimony given before state legislatures*
- *Breaking news*
- *Fire facts*
- *...and more!*

If you have something that you would like to contribute, please send it to us at publisher@campus-firewatch.com

See you there!